

TAKE A PLANK.

If You Will Not Enter the Port of
Safety on Board the Ship, Float
In on a Spar.

You Say You Do Not Believe in Hell,
Do You Believe Herod With His
Children Victims in Heaven?

If You Have Been a Sinner All Your Life
And Have a Day or an Hour Left,
Go to Christ.

Special to the Gazette.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Jan. 16.—For many years the Brooklyn Tabernacle, the largest Protestant church in America, has been thronged twice on the Sabbath, every available inch occupied, even the aisles, pulpit stairs and doorways, and multitudes going away unable to get in. Dr. Talmage recently announced to his congregation that, if the present building could be sold for an academy of music, another church, one holding 10,000 people, would be erected. This morning after expounding the scriptures, he gave out the hymn:

Sinners turn, why will ye die?
God, your Maker, asks you why.

The subject of the sermon was "Broken Pieces of the Ship," and the text, Acts xxvii, 41: "Some on broken pieces of the ship." Dr. Talmage spoke as follows:

Never off Goodwin Sands, or the Skerries, or Cape Hatteras was a ship in worse predicament than in the Mediterranean hurricane was the grain ship on which 270 passengers were driven on the coast of Malta, five miles from the metropolis of that island, called Clitta Vecchia. After a two weeks' tempest and the ship was entirely disabled and captain and crew were completely demoralized, an old missionary took command of the vessel. He was small,

CROOKED-BACKED and sore-eyed, according to tradition. It was Paul, the only unscarred man aboard. He was no more afraid of a Euroclydon tossing the Mediterranean Sea, now up to the gates of heaven and now sinking it to the gates of hell, than he was afraid of a kitten playing with a string. He ordered them all down to take their ration, first asking for them a blessing. Then he insured all their lives, telling them they would be rescued, and so far from losing their heads, they would not lose so much of their hair as you could cut off with one click of the scissors; aye, not a thread of it, whether it was grey with age or golden with youth. "There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you."

Knowing that they can never get to the desired port, they make the sea or the fourteenth night black with overthrown cargo, so that when the ship strikes it will not strike so heavily. At daybreak they saw a creek, and in their excitement resolved to make for it. And so they cut the cables, took in the two paddles that they had on these old boats, and hoisted the main-sail so that they might come with such force as to be driven high up the beach by some fortunate billow. There she goes—tumbling toward the rocks, now fore foremost, now stern foremost, now rolling over to starboard, now a wave dashes clear over the deck and it seems as if the old craft has gone forever. But up she comes again. Paul's arm around a mast, he cries: "All is well. God has given me all those that sail with me." "Crash!" went the prow with such force that it broke off the mast. "Crash!" went the timbers till the sea rushed through from side to side of the vessel. She parts amidships, and into a thousand fragments the vessel goes, and into the waves 270 immortals are precipitated. Some of them had been brought up on the seashore and had learned to swim, and with their chin just above the waves and by stroke of both arms and propulsion

OF BOTH FEET, they put out for the beach and reached it. But alas for those others! They had never learned to swim, or they were wounded by the falling of the mast, or the nervous shock was too great for them, and others had been weakened by long sea-sickness.

Oh, what will become of them? "Take that piece of a rudder," says Paul to one. "Take that fragment of a spar," says Paul to another. "Take that table," "Take that image of Castor and Pollux," "Take that plank from the lifeboat," "Take anything and head for the beach!" What a struggle for life in the breakers! Oh, the merciless waters, how they sweep over the heads of men, women and children! Hold on there! Almost ashore, keep up your courage! Remember what Paul told you. There, the receding wave on the beach leaves in the sand a whole family. There, crawls up out of the surf the centurion. There another plank comes in with a life clinging fast to it. There another piece of the shattered vessel with its freightage of an immortal soul. They must by this time all be saved. Yes; there comes in last of all, for he had been overseeing the rest, the old missionary, who wrings the water from his gray beard and cries out: "Thank God, all are here!"

Gather them around a fire and call the roll. Paul builds a fire, and when the bundles of sticks begin to crackle, and standing and sitting around the blaze, the passengers begin to recover from their chill, and their wet clothes begin to dry, and warmth begins to come into all the shivering passengers, let the purser of the vessel go around and see if any of the poor creatures are missing. Not one of the crowd that were plunged into the sea. How it relieves our anxiety as we read: "Some on broken pieces of the ship, and so it came to pass that all escaped safe to land."

Having on previous occasions looked at the other passengers, I confine myself to-day to the examination of those who came in

ON BROKEN PIECES of the ship. There is something about them that excites in me an intense interest. I am not so much interested in those that come ashore. They get ashore as I expected. A mile of water is not a very great undertaking for a strong swimmer, or even two miles are not. But I cannot stop thinking about those on broken pieces of the ship. The great-gospel ship is the finest vessel of the universe and can carry more passengers than any craft ever constructed, and you could no more wreck it than you could wreck the throne of God Almighty. I wish all the people would come aboard of her. I could not promise a smooth voyage, for oftentimes it will be tempestuous or a choppy sea, but I could promise safe arrival for all who took passage on that Great Eastern,

so called by me because its commander came out of the east, the star of the East a badge of His authority.

But a vast multitude do not take regular passage. Their theology is broken in pieces, and their life is broken in pieces, and their worldly and spiritual prospects are broken in pieces, and yet I believe they are going to reach the shining shore, and I am encouraged by the experience of those people who are spoken of in the text: "Some on broken pieces of the ship."

One object in this sermon is to encourage all those who cannot take the whole system of religion as we believe it, but who really believe something, to come ashore on that one plank. I do not underrate the value of a great theological system, but where in all the Bible is there anything that says: Believe in John Calvin and thou shalt be saved; or believe in Arminius and thou shalt be saved; or believe in the Synod of Dort and thou shalt be saved; or believe in the Thirty-nine Articles and thou shalt be saved? A man may be orthodox and

GO TO HELL, or heterodox and go to heaven. The man who in the deep affection of his heart accepts Christ is saved, and the man who does not accept Him is lost.

I believe in both the Heidelberg and Westminster catechisms, and I wish you all did, but you may believe in nothing they contain except the one idea that Christ came to save sinners, and that you are one of them, and you are instantly rescued. If you can come in on the grand old ship, I would rather have you get aboard, but if you can find only a piece of wood as long as the human body, or a piece as wide as the outspread human arms, and either of them is a piece of the cross, come in on that piece. Tens of thousands of people are to-day kept out of the Kingdom of God because they cannot believe anything.

I am talking with a man thoughtful of his soul who has lately traveled through New England and passed the night at Andover. He says to me: "I cannot believe that in this life the destiny is irrevocably fixed; I think there will be another opportunity of repentance after death." I say to him: "My brother, what has that to do with you? Don't you realize that the man who waits for another chance after death when he has a good chance before death is a stark fool? Had not you better take the plank that is thrown to you now and head for shore rather than wait for a plank that may by invisible hands be thrown to you after you are dead? Do as you please, but as for myself, with pardon for all my sins offered me now and all the joys of time and eternity offered me now, I instantly take them rather than run the risk of such other chance as wise men think."

THEY CAN FEEL OF or twist out of a Scripture passage that has for all the Christian centuries been interpreted another way.

You say: "I do not like Princeton theology, or New Haven theology, or Andover theology." I do not ask you on board either of these great men-of-war, their port holes filled with the great sieges of ecclesiastical battle. But I do ask you to take the one plank of the Gospel that you do believe in and strike out for the pearl-strung beach of Heaven.

Says some other man: "I would attend to religion if I was quite sure about the doctrine of election and free agency, but that mixes me all up." Those things need to be settled, but I have no more perplexity about them, for I say to myself: "If I love Christ and live a good, honest, useful life, I am elected to be saved; and if I do not love Christ and live a bad life, I will be damned, and all the theological seminaries of the universe cannot make it any different." I flourished a long time while in the sea of sin and doubt, and it was as rough as the Mediterranean on the fourteenth night when they threw the grain overboard, but I saw there was mercy for a sinner, and that plank I took, and I have been warming myself by the bright fire on the shore for three decades.

While I am talking to another man about his soul he tells me: "I do not become a Christian because I do not believe there is any hell at all." And don't you? Do all the people, of all beliefs and no belief at all, of good morals and bad morals, go straight to a happy Heaven? Do the holy and the debauched have the same destination? At midnight in a hallway the owner of a house and a burglar meet each other, and they both fire, and both are wounded, but the burglar died in five minutes and the owner of the house lives a week after, while the burglar be at

THE GATE OF HEAVEN

waiting when the house-owner comes in? Will the debauchee and the libertine go right in among the families of Heaven? I wonder if Herod is playing on the banks of the River of Life with the children he has sacrificed. I wonder if Charles Guiteau and John Wilkes Booth are there shouting at a mark. I do not now controvert it, although I must say that for such a miserable heaven I have no admiration. But the Bible does not say: "Believe in perdition and be saved." Because all are saved, according to your theory, that ought not to keep you from loving and serving Christ. Do not refuse to come ashore because all the others are according to your theory, are going to get ashore. You may have a different theory about chemistry, about astronomy, about the atmosphere, from that which others adopt, but you are not therefore hindered from action. Because your theory of light is different from others, do not refuse to open your eyes. Because your theory of air is different, do not refuse to breathe. Because your theory about the stellar system is different, do not refuse to acknowledge the North star. Why should the fact that your theological theories are different, hinder you from acting upon what you know? If you have not a whole ship fashioned in the theological dry docks to bring you to wharfare, you have at least a plank: "Some on broken pieces of the ship."

"But I don't believe in revival!" Then go to your room, and all alone with your door locked give your heart to God and join some church where the thermometer never gets higher than fifty in the shade. "But I do not believe in baptism!" Come in without it and settle the matter afterward. "But there are so many inconsistent Christians!" Then come in and show them by

A GOOD EXAMPLE how professors ought to act. "But I don't believe in the Old Testament!" Then come in on the New. "But I don't like the Book of Romans!" Then come in on Matthew or Luke. Refusing to come to Christ, whom you admit to be the Savior of the lost, because you cannot admit other things, you are like a man out there in that Mediterranean tempest and tossed in the Melita breakers, refusing to come ashore until he can mend the pieces of the broken ship. I hear him say: "I won't go in on any of these planks until

I know in what part of the ship they belong. When I can get the windlass in the right place, and the sails set, and that keel-piece where it belongs, and that floor timber right, and those ropes untangled, I will go ashore. I am an old sailor and know all about ships for forty years, and as soon as I can get the vessel afloat in good shape I will come in." A man drifting by on a piece of wood overhears him and says: "You will drown before you get that ship reconstructed. Better do as I am doing. I know nothing about ships, and never saw one before I came on board this, and I cannot swim a stroke, but I am going ashore on this shivered timber." The man in the offing while trying to mend his ship goes down. The man who trusted to the plank is saved. O, my brother, let your smashed-up system of theology go to the bottom while you come in on a splintered spar! "Some on broken pieces of the ship."

You may get all your difficulties settled as Garibaldi, the magnetic Italian, got his gardens made. When the war between Austria and Sardinia broke out he was living at Caprea, a very rough and uncultured island home. But he went forth with his sword to achieve the liberation of Naples and Sicily, and gave 3,000,000 people free government under Victor Emmanuel. Garibaldi, after being

ABSENT TWO YEARS

from Caprea, returned and, when he approached it, he found that his home had been taken by Victor Emmanuel as a surprise. Edged, trimmed shrubbery had taken the place of thistles, the old rookery in which he once lived had given way to a pictured mansion where he lived in comfort the rest of his days. And I tell you if you will come and enlist under the banner of our Victor Emmanuel, and follow Him through thick and thin, and fight his battles, and endure his sacrifices, you will find after awhile that He has changed your heart from a jungle of thorny skepticism into a garden all abloom with luxuriant joy that you have never dreamt of. From a tangled Caprea of sadness into a Paradise of God!

I do not know how your theological system went to pieces. It may be that your parents started you with only one plank, and you believe little or nothing. Or they may have been too rigid and severe in religious discipline, a cracked plank over the head with a psalm-book. It may be that some partner in business, who was a member of an evangelical church, played on you a trick that disgusted you with religion. It may be that you have associates who have talked against Christianity in your presence until you are "all at sea," and you dwell more on things that you do not believe than on things that you do believe. You are in one respect like Lord Nelson, when a signal was lifted that he wished to disregard and he put his sea-glass to his blind eye and said: "I really do not see the signal." O, my hearer, put this field-glass of the Gospel no longer to your blind eye, and say I cannot see, but put it to your other eye, the eye of faith, and you will see Christ, and he is all you need to see.

If you can believe nothing else, you certainly believe in

VICARIOUS SUFFERING,

for you see it almost every day in some shape. Last month the steamship Knickerbocker of the Cromwell line, running between New Orleans and here, was in great storms, and the captain and crew saw the schooner Mary D. Cramer of Philadelphia in distress. The weather was bad, the waves were high, the first officer of the steamship and four men put in a lifeboat to save the crew of the schooner, and reached the vessel and towed it out of danger, the wind shifting so that the vessel was saved. But the five men of the steamship coming back, their boat capsized, yet righted again and came on, the sailors coated with ice. The boat capsized again, and three times up set and was righted, and a line was thrown the poor fellows, but their hands and arms were frozen so they could not grasp it, and a great wave rolled over them, and they went down never to rise till the sea gives up its dead. Appreciate that help and self-sacrifice of the brave fellows we all can, and can we not appreciate the Christ who put out in a more oblique and into a more overwhelming surge to bring us out of infinite peril into everlasting safety? The wave of human hate rolled over Him from one side and the wave of hellish fury rolled over Him on the other. Oh, the thickness of the night and the thunder of the tempest into which Christ plunged for our rescue!

Come in on that narrow beam, the beam of the cross. Let all else go and cling to that. Put that under you, and with the earnestness of a swimmer struggling for his life put out for shore. There is a great wave of welcome ready built, and already many who were as far out as you are, are standing in its genial and heavenly glow. The angels of God's rescue are wading out into the surf

TO CLUTCH YOUR HAND, and they know how exhausted you are, and all the redeemed prodigals of heaven are on the beach with new white robes to clothe all those who come in on broken pieces of the ship.

My sympathies are for such all the more because I was naturally skeptical, disposed to question everything about this life and the next, and was in danger of being further out to sea than any of the 270 in the Mediterranean breakers, and I was sometimes the annoyance of my theological professor because I asked so many questions. But I came in on a plank. I knew Christ was the Saviour of sinners, and that I was a sinner, and I got ashore, and I do not propose to go out on that sea again. I have not for thirty minutes discussed the controverted points of theology in thirty years. And during the rest of my life I do not propose to discuss them for thirty seconds.

I would rather, in a mud-scow, try to weather the worst cyclone that ever swept up from the Caribbean than risk my immortal soul in useless and perilous discussions in which some of my brethren in the ministry are indulging. They remind me of a company of sailors standing on Rimsgate pier-head, from which the life-boats are usually launched, and coolly discussing the different style of oarlocks and how deep a boat ought to set in the water, while a hurricane is in full blast, and there are three steamers crowded with passengers going to pieces in the offing. An old tar, the muscles of his face working with nervous excitement, cries out: "This is no time to discuss such things. Man the life-boat! Who will volunteer? Out with her into the surf! Pull, my lads, pull: or the wreck! Ha! ha! Now we have them. Lift them in and lay them down on the bottom of the boat. Jack, you try to bring them too. Put these blankets around their hands and feet, and I will pull for the shore. God help me!"

THEIR LANKED! HEZE! When there are so many struggling in the waves of sin and sorrow and wretched-

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edness, let all else go but salvation for time and salvation forever.

I bethink myself that there are some here whose opportunity or whose life is a mere wreck, and they have only a small piece left. You started in youth with all sails set and everything promised a grand voyage, but you have sailed in the wrong direction or have lumbered on a rock. You have only a fragment of time left. Then come in on that one plank. "Some on broken pieces of the ship."

You admit you are all broken up, one decade of your life gone by, two decades, three decades, four decades, a half century, perhaps three-quarters of a century gone. The hour hand and the minute hand of your clock of life are

ALMOST PARALLEL, and soon it will be twelve and your day ended. Clear discouraged are you? I admit it is a sad thing to give all of our lives that are worth anything to sin and the devil, and then at last make God a present of a first-rate corpse. But the past you cannot recover. Get on board that old ship you never will. Have you only one more year left, one more month, one more week, one more day, one more hour—come in on that. Perhaps if you get to Heaven God may let you go out on some great mission to some other world, where you can somewhat atone for your lack of service in this.

From many a debauched I have seen the hands thrown up in deprecation something like this: "My life has been wasted. I had good mental faculties, and fine social position, and great opportunity, but through worldliness and neglect all has gone to waste save these few remaining hours. I now accept of Christ, and shall enter heaven through His mercy, but alas, alas, that when I might have entered the haven of eternal rest with a full cargo, and been greeted by the waving hands of a multitude in whose salvation I had borne a blessed part, I must confess I now enter the harbor of heaven on broken pieces of the ship!"

Alfalfa on the Arid Plains.

Sacramento Record-Union, Dec. 23.

Last spring the Heilbron brothers of this city sent a car load of calves from Sacramento to their Wildflower ranch in Fresno county. The stock was of the best blood and were put in an alfalfa field. They were kept there on this green feed through the spring, summer and winter. One day last week twenty head of the yearlings were placed in a car and returned to this city, where they were slaughtered for Christmas meats. The lightest one weighed 500 pounds, while several of the larger ones tipped the beam at over 700. The meat is said by these market men to be finer than anything that has been seen in this city for the past ten years, and proves conclusively what can be done on the sandy wastes of Fresno with industry, water and alfalfa seed. Seven years ago the land in question could not be given away. It was a level, sandy plain, that shifted with the wind, and no sign of vegetation was to be seen anywhere, except a species of sage brush and a few specimens of the cactus family. To-day it is fenced, and the fields of grain, meadows of alfalfa, and extensive vineyards are the pride of many an honest farmer. When August Heilbron first obtained possession of a section of this land he offered to give a quarter of it to a friend. After viewing the uninviting tract the latter refused the proffered gift. He wanted "no desert in his." The land is nearly all in alfalfa, and supports hundreds of cattle and sheep, which require no care whatever. They have an unlimited supply at all seasons of green and nutritious feed, and go to the market in a far superior condition to those that are stall and corn fed for that purpose. The lambs shipped from that place last week are as large as full grown sheep, fat as butter, and of course, when age is taken into consideration, of superior quality. This goes to prove what can be done in every part of this great valley of California in the live stock business by industrious farmers.

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LIST OF LETTERS

Remain in the postoffice at Fort Worth, Tex., Monday, Jan. 17, 1887. To obtain any of these letters, the applicant must call for "advertisements" and give the date of this list.

Anderson, A. L. Mathews, E.

Albright, Fannie McLaughlin, Mollie

Atwood, May McDonald, Mittie

Burley, C. H. Metaston, Mary

Booker, Mary E. Powell, Lizdie

Brown, Bessie Pirman, M. A.

Brown, V. A. Peterson, Emma

Call, Ellen Park, Bettie

Calvin, Lizzie Priest, Doctor

Carroll, Mattie Quinn, John D.

Clark, Mary H. Quinn, H. D.

Clinton, John R. Quinn, J. D.

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